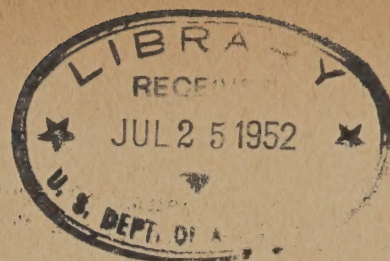


BUYING CHILDREN'S SHOES^{1/}
(Pre-school and grade school)



I. Assumption:

Extension clothing specialists can afford to spend the time for taking leadership in providing help on buying children's shoes because:

1. Information on buying children's shoes from easily available sources seems to be inadequate.
2. Shoes were the highest yearly clothing expenditure for both boys and girls in the studies of Family Clothing Supplies by the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics (families with 0-2 children aged 2-15).

Minneapolis^{2/}
- St. Paul
(1948 - 1949)

For boys(aged 2-15) shoes (street, dress or sport)	-	\$14.00
For girls(aged 2-15) shoes(street, dress or sport)	-	15.00

Source: Preliminary Report No. 2, Family Clothing Purchases by Income. Minneapolis-St. Paul, 1948-1949. BHNHE, U. S. D. A.

3. The population of children is at an all time high. Figures from the Mid-century White House Conference on Children and Youth, show that the decade from 1940 to 1950 saw great increases in the birth rate. In 1950, there were more than 15 million children under 5 years and nearly 15 million children from 5 to 9 years of age.
4. Well-shaped shoes are particularly important for children. The Children's Bureau advises in its publication "Your Child from 6 to 12", "...The greater softness of children's bones means that their bodies are more flexible than adults', which has both advantages and disadvantages...The lack of firmness in their bones means that care must be taken to see the pressure does not cause deformed bones. The reason we hear so much about providing well-shaped shoes that are large enough to provide room for the growth of the feet, is because a child's foot bones may be permanently harmed by being crowded into short or narrow shoes that distort the bones. Even the pressure due to short stockings is bad. Those children are fortunate who live where they can go barefoot safely."

^{1/} Prepared by Alice Linn, Extension Clothing Specialist, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. May 1, 1952.

^{2/} Farm-operator families. If the expenditures by Meeker-Wright families were adjusted for the price changes in the year between the studies, the figure would be slightly higher.

II. Objectives:

1. To help parents of preschool and grade school children buy the most suitable shoes for their children that they can afford.
2. To develop a better understanding of the relation of shoes to the health of the child.

III. Background: What does the specialist need to know?

Manufacturers and distributors of clothing with a more or less national market may be very much interested in national figures showing income, spending, and price trends. The county home demonstration agent and the local retailer are more interested in the income brackets of families living in their county or trading area and the market, and employment conditions there. The specialist is in between and has an interest in knowing national and State facts so she can better help the agent evaluate local trends.

1. Distribution of Family Income. In the United States nearly one-third of the families have incomes of less than \$2,000. Of course a money income of \$2,000 on a farm would go further than the same income in a city. Who are these families with less than \$2,000 in a given community? Are they families with young children or are they retired couples? To which ones is clothing important socially? To which ones would buying clothing be a money problem? Is there a difference in the desires of a low-income family living in a community where the whole community has about the same income and those where the community ranges from high to low?

More than a third of the families in the United States are in the \$2,000 to \$4,000 income group. Are they the "good customers" in a small town community? Are they the ones that influence the kind of shoes the merchant stocks? What is the difference in the way they spend for clothes and the way a family of the same income living in an urbanized area spends for clothes?

Less than a third of the families living in the United States have incomes of more than \$4,000. They have the most dollar votes in the clothing market. Would buying children's shoes be a money problem to them? Would they be more apt to get a doctor's advice on their children's foot and shoe problem?

Percent Distribution of Families by 1949 Incomes

Income	United States				
	North	East	North	Central	South West
Under 1,000 -----	15	11	12	24	11
\$1,000 to 1,999 -----	16	11	13	21	13
\$2,000 to 2,999 -----	18	19	19	18	17
\$3,000 to 3,999 -----	20	22	22	15	22
\$4,000 to 4,999 -----	12	14	13	9	14
\$5,000 to 5,999 -----	8	9	9	5	9
\$6,000 and over -----	12	14	12	8	14

Source: Bureau of the Census (U. S. Dept. of Commerce, Washington 25, D. C. (1950 Census of Population, Preliminary Report, Series PC-7, No. 2).

2. Trends in incomes and spending.

As a group, consumers spend more for clothing as they have more to spend. Clothing expenditures are always a big item in personal expenditures. Disposable income more than doubled from 1941 to 1950, as did expenditures for clothing. Prices went up but not as much as disposable income.

In considering the income figures it is well to remember that population increased from 131,169,000 in 1940 to 150,697,000 in 1950, and that the two age groups where the greatest change occurred were in the under 5 and over 75. Though not all families benefit equally from rising incomes, a general knowledge of trends in incomes and prices can help an agent in evaluating comments about prices which often come up in meetings. National figures would probably be more comparable to urbanized areas than to other areas. Do our county analyses bear out that statement?

Clothing prices increased more than the general trend. Prices of children's shoes increased even more, in fact, they practically doubled.

Personal income and expenditures

	1950	1949	1941	1935
Disposable personal income (billions of dollars)	204.3	186.4	92.0	58.0
Personal consumption expenditures " " "	193.6	180.2	82.3	56.2
Clothing, accessories and jewelry " " "	22.9	22.9	10.5	6.9
Clothing, accessories and jewelry (percent of disposable income) -----	11%	12%	11%	12%
Clothing, accessories and jewelry (percent of consumption expenditures) -----	12%	13%	13%	12%

Source: A supplement to the Survey of Current Business, National Income, 1951 edition.

Consumers' price index (1935-39=100) for moderate-income families in large cities

Items	1950	1949	1941	1935
All items -----	171.9	171.9	105.2	98.1
Food -----	204.5	210.2	105.5	100.4
Apparel -----	187.7	198.0	106.3	96.8
Rent -----	131.0	121.2	106.4	94.2
Fuel, electricity, refrigeration ----	140.6	133.9	102.2	100.7
House furnishings -----	190.2	195.8	107.3	94.8
Miscellaneous -----	156.5	149.9	104.0	98.1

Source: Monthly Labor Review.

Index of Retail Prices of Selected Articles Purchased by Moderate Income Families in Large Cities of the United States (1935-39=100)

	1950	1949	1941	1935
Children's Shoes -----	215.1	210.9	108.9	95.9

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor.

3. Expenditures for children's shoes.

What clues can we get from the Studies of Family Clothing Supplies? In the Minneapolis-St. Paul studies, the boys purchased about $2\frac{1}{2}$ pairs of shoes a year and the girls nearer 3 pairs. The average price paid for the boys' shoes was about \$5.95 and for the girls' shoes about \$4.95. How do these prices compare with those quoted by the trade as the best sellers? How do they compare with the prices reported in our county analyses? Would \$5.95 be a safe price to choose in talking about shoes over television almost anywhere, or would we need to know price ranges from \$4.50 to \$5.95? Did the women interviewed worry much about the price of children's shoes? Can parents cut down on the price they pay for children's shoes when they get in a financial squeeze?

Expenditures for Children's Shoes - Family Income

		\$2,000-\$3,000-	\$3,000-\$4,000-	\$4,000-
Shoes (street, dress, sport)	All	2,999	3,999	5,999
a. Boys (2-15)				
Average yearly expenditure -----	\$14.22	12.93	14.82	15.04
Average number purchased -----	2.48	2.69	2.66	2.44
Percent purchasing -----	97%	100%	98%	100%
Average unit price -----	5.73	4.80	5.57	6.16
b. Girls (2-15)				
Average yearly expenditure -----	\$14.89	12.84	14.13	15.87
Average number purchased -----	2.93	2.74	2.85	2.94
Percent purchasing -----	98%	100%	95%	97%
Average unit price -----	5.09	4.70	4.95	5.40

Amount Spent for Children's Shoes in Relation to all
Clothing Expenditures

		Family Income			
		\$2,000-\$3,000	\$3,000-\$4,000	\$4,000-\$5,000	\$5,000+
		All	2,999	3,999	5,999
<hr/>					
a. Boys (2-15)					
Families' average expenditure					
for clothing -----	\$354	\$257	\$320	\$506	
Boys' average expenditure -----	80	63	74	84	
Boys' average expenditure for					
shoes (street, dress or sport) -	14	13	15	15	
 b. Girls (2-15)					
Families' average expenditure					
for clothing -----	\$354	\$259	\$320	\$506	
Girls' average expenditure -----	84	65	76	89	
Girls' average expenditure for					
shoes (street, dress or sport)	15	13	14	16	

Source: Preliminary Report No. 2. Family Clothing Purchases by
Income. Minneapolis-St. Paul, 1948-1949. BHNHE, U. S. D. A.

4. Shoes and Health.

According to the Children's Bureau in its publication on Infant Care--"If you decide shoes are necessary when your baby starts walking, pick out his shoes with the good development of his feet in mind. They need to have firm but flexible soles that fit the outline of his foot, which is straight along the inside. The soles should be heelless and rough enough so that the baby will not slip. If shoes or floors are slippery a baby may get to be afraid of trying to walk.

The upper part of the shoe should be of soft and yielding leather. Shoes should fit snugly at the heel, but be broad and roomy at the toe. Your baby's shoes when bought should be about a half inch longer than his foot and at least one-fourth inch wider at the toes. Notice the thickness of the baby's instep and toes and see that the shoes have plenty of space for them--up and down. This is very important; sometimes shoes are right in the shape of the sole and in length and in width, but are not high enough at the instep and the toe. Check the fit of the shoe carefully and often to see that the baby's toes are not crowded as his feet grow. This must be done often because his feet grow fast. As soon as his toes come within one-fourth inch of the end of the shoe, longer shoes should be bought.

Your baby will outgrow his shoes very rapidly in his first year, so you will not have to buy expensive, long-wearing ones. If he wears shoes by the time he is 8 months old, he may need a new pair almost every month; from 15 months to 2 years he will need a pair every 2 or 3 months. Parents hate to stop using a pair of shoes

when "there is still a lot of wear in them." But when they realize the lasting damage to the feet the outgrown shoes can cause, they make a great effort to keep the baby supplied with shoes that fit.

"Examine your baby's feet often to see whether there is any thickening of the skin or any pink, red, or darkened places on his feet, as these may be due to pressure from shoes.

"...Socks for a baby, once he has begun to wear shoes, should be chosen carefully. They should, after being washed, be at least half an inch longer than the baby's foot."

Do mothers recognize the importance of well-fitted shoes? Does extension have a responsibility there? How can the specialist "plant seeds" for getting the interest of the mothers in this subject?

5. Working Mothers. A good deal is heard and read about more women working outside the home. Although community estimates would be the important ones to the agent, a specialist wants to know State and national figures when she is planning press releases and other mass media with wide coverage. For example, will a day-time radio broadcast be likely to catch the mothers of young children?

Employment of wives, husband present--

Are more wives employed?^{1/}

Trend (by years)	Percent
1950 -----	24
1949 -----	23
1940 -----	15

What proportion of rural and urban wives are employed?

Residence (1950)	Percent
Rural farm -----	17
Rural non-farm -----	22
Urban -----	26

Are many of the wives with children employed?

Age of Children (1950)	Percent
With children under 6 years ----	12
With children 6-17 and none under 6	28
With no children under 18 -----	30

Source: Rural Family Living Charts,
Oct. 1951, BPHHE. U. S. D. A.

^{1/}Included in the "employed" are persons working without pay for 15 hours or more during the week on a family farm or business.

6. In what price range are the best sellers found? What are the popular styles in this price range? How do lower price ranges differ? Higher price ranges? Are there differences in marketing shoes according to region, type of store, type of community, etc.?
7. Where and how do people buy children's shoes? Do they take the children with them to try on the shoes? Do they order much by mail?
8. How can a homemaker judge a good fit when buying shoes for her children? What about X-ray? Is it harmful?
9. How can a homemaker judge quality by looking at a shoe? By reading newspaper ads? Mail order catalogues? What do the different terms mean?
10. What is the relationship of price to a good fit? Of price to quality? What are the hidden values? Is there much choice at a given price?

